

This Johns Hopkins study found that experiences with racism among urban youth were associated with low perceived academic control, which then was associated with increased depressive symptoms.

Links between Perceived Racism, Low Academic Control, and Depression among African American Youth

Experiences with racism are a common occurrence for African American youth and may result in negative self perceptions relevant for the experience of depressive symptoms. This study examined the longitudinal association between perceptions of racism and depressive symptoms, and whether perceived academic or social control mediated this association, in a community epidemiologically-defined sample of urban African American adolescents. Participants were 500 African American middle school students (46.4% female) who were initially assessed in the fall of first grade as part of an evaluation of two school-based preventive interventions whose immediate targets were early learning and aggressive behavior in first grade. The original sample consisted of 678 children and families, representative of students entering first grade in nine Baltimore City public elementary schools, who were recruited for participation in the intervention trials. Structural equation modeling revealed that experiences with racism were associated with low perceived academic control, which in turn was associated with increased depressive symptoms. Findings suggest that experiences with racism can have long lasting effects for African American youth's depressive symptoms, and highlight the detrimental effects of experiences with racism for perceptions of control in the academic domain. Lambert S, Herman K, Bynum M, Ialongo N. Perceptions of racism and depressive symptoms in African American adolescents: The role of perceived academic and social control. *J Youth Adolesc.* 2009;38(4):519-531. [Director's Report – Feb 2010, p. 89]